

that Colombia is meeting its commitments. We are eager to see Congress move the Colombia trade agreement forward as soon as possible (. . .).”—USTR Ron Kirk, June 13, 2011.

April 22 Milestones: U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk sent a letter to the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Senate Finance and House Ways and Means Committees “indicating that Colombia has taken the necessary steps, consistent with the April 22 milestones outlined in the Action Plan, to move to the next stage in the process.”—USTR Ron Kirk, May 4, 2011.

COLOMBIA IS ON THE RIGHT TRACK: PROMOTING AND PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS AND THE RESPECT TO HUMAN RIGHTS

“On September 8, 2011, the Department of State determined and certified to Congress that the Colombian Government is meeting statutory criteria related to human rights.”—U.S. State Department, September 15, 2011.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) Committee that has monitored Colombia since 1985, excluded Colombia in June 2010 and again this year from the list of countries that need special monitoring.—ILO, June 2011.

For the first time in more than a decade, Colombia has been selected as a titular member of the ILO Governing Body for the 2011-2014 term. Colombia was elected with 96 percent of votes from the tripartite delegations of 182 countries around the world.—ILO, June 2011.

COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT AND LABOR UNIONS: WORKING HAND IN HAND

An effective Three-Party Agreement was signed by the Colombian Government, labor unions and employers to strengthen democracy and advance the social dialogue on labor issues. The Agreement, which was originally signed in June 2006, was updated in May 2011 to reaffirm all three parties’ commitment to reestablishing a social dialogue to generate solutions on labor-related issues and address conflicts and differences.—May 2011.

The Colombian Government and Colombian Federation of Educators—Fecode, which represents 250,000 educators—signed an historic agreement on May 4, 2011 that will improve working conditions and the quality of life for the nation’s educators. “We achieved very important points and discussed important topics such as the teachers’ status. As teachers, we have welcomed this agreement.”—Senén Niño, President of Fecode. June 15, 2011.

TRADE UNIONS AND NGO EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR ACTION PLAN AND PROGRESSIVE AGENDA

On the Progressive Agenda: “The General Labor Confederation (CGT) salutes the achievements of the Administration of President Juan Manuel Santos during his first year in office. The Administration has enacted a series of policies of enormous value to workers and all Colombians.”—CGT, August 11, 2011.

On the Progressive Agenda: “The agenda that is being constructed at this moment is the result of a constant battle and the work of the Colombian union movement with the support of international unions. The measures contained in the agreement signed by Presidents Santos and Obama last week, the recommendations of the High Level Mission of the OIT that visited us in February, and President Santos’ programs on labor are all measures that the union movement has advocated for years.”—Luciano Sanin, Director of the National Union School (ENS), April 2011.

On the Action Plan: “It is a step in the right direction that the President (Santos) deepened the agreement so that the topics of union liberty, human rights and guarantees for workers are included in the FTA.”—Julio Roberto Gomez, General Secretary of the CGT, April 8, 2011.

A VIEW FROM OUTSIDE: “COLOMBIA’S PROGRESS DESERVES SUPPORT”

“The best way to encourage Mr. Santos to take further steps to end impunity and protect activists, political candidates and indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities is to approve the FTA.” (. . .) “Democrats should join in ratifying the Colombia pact, and they should credit progress on human rights.”—Mark Schneider, Senior Vice President, International Crisis Group and Former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, September 18, 2011.

“We commend President Juan Manuel Santos’s commitment to compensate the victims of violence and return confiscated land to poor farmers. And we applaud efforts to reduce homicides of union members, which Colombia reports have declined by nearly 90% since 2002. These are significant steps. The FTA will further Colombia’s progress by providing clear protections for fundamental labor rights.”—Sens. John Kerry (D-MA) and Max Baucus (D-MT), Wall Street Journal Op-ed, April 4, 2011.

“A Gain for Workers.” In an article on labor cooperatives, Revista Semana highlighted that the new decree that tackles illegal forms of labor intermediation “is very good news for the working class (. . .) 300,000 jobs will be formalized (. . .) several companies are already adjusting to the new standard. Carrefour added 600 employees to its payroll, representing additional annual costs of about 5,000 million pesos (US\$2.5 million). Exito has hired 2,500 packers, as part of a plan that includes the direct hiring of 6,250 employees this year. This will cost Exito about 70,000 million pesos per year (US\$35 million).”—Revista Semana, June 18, 2011. The Colombian news weekly Revista Semana was awarded in 2009 by the Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA) with the Charles A. Perlik, Jr. Award for Excellence in the Field of Print Journalism throughout the hemisphere.

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 12, 2011

Mr. COFFMAN of Colorado. Mr. Speaker, today our national debt is \$14,863,312,407,851.35.

On January 6, 2009, the start of the 111th Congress, the national debt was \$10,638,425,746,293.80.

This means the national debt has increased by \$4,224,886,661,557.55 since then. This debt and its interest payments we are passing to our children and all future Americans.

SOCIAL SECURITY, MEDICARE, AND MEDICAID

HON. JOE BACA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 12, 2011

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues on the Joint Select Committee on

Deficit Reduction to not make cuts to vital safety net programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

52.5 Million people received Social Security in 2009 alone—and 3 million seniors live below the \$11,000 federal poverty level.

Today, 40 million Americans are enrolled in Medicare.

More than 48 million people rely on Medicaid services.

Unfortunately, Republicans want to turn back the clock and place increasing costly burdens on the backs of America’s seniors and their families.

We must not ask seniors to sacrifice benefits before asking the wealthiest few and major companies to pay their fair share.

Seniors have health care security and a greater financial security because of these services—we must ensure their protection and avoid cuts that will negatively impact job creation.

We must lower our long-term deficit and work together to find a better solution so that America’s beneficiaries are not at risk.

TO COMMEMORATE THE GRAND OPENING OF OTTO BOCK POLYURETHANE TECHNOLOGIES IN ROCHESTER HILLS, MI

HON. GARY C. PETERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 12, 2011

Mr. PETERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark the grand opening of Otto Bock Polyurethane Technologies in Rochester Hills, Michigan. Otto Bock is world-renowned and award-winning for its work in the field of prosthetics and orthotics. The story of the Otto Bock family of companies is a striking example of how innovation and technology can be transferred across discrete industries to create synergies for new products and processes.

Founded in 1919 in Berlin, Germany and named for its founder, Otto Bock has stayed true to its origins as an innovator and manufacturer of prosthetic devices. The perpetual process of innovating and improving prostheses combined with the challenge presented by the physical needs of returning war veterans, pushed Bock to use new materials and processes to increase production of improved prostheses. Traditionally an artisan-based process, Bock sought to move the industry toward a component-based manufacturing system. He was a forerunner in the use of aluminum parts and in 1950, he applied the first plastics to prosthetic production, some of which are still used today. Recognizing the vast potential of this new material, Max Näder, Bock’s son-in-law, founded the Otto Bock Kunststoff in 1953. Today, the company is an important technology partner for Otto Bock HealthCare as well as a successful developer